

## **Southeast Museum 2025 Annual Report**

**Southeast Museum**  
**67 Main Street**  
**Brewster, NY 10509**  
**Telephone: (845) 279-7500**  
**Email: [deborahoswald@southeastmuseum.org](mailto:deborahoswald@southeastmuseum.org)**

### **Description of Agency**

The Southeast Museum is a non-profit, educational institution established in 1963. The museum's primary service area is Putnam, Westchester and Dutchess Counties in New York State, as well as Fairfield County, CT. The Southeast Museum is located in a restored landmark building, the 1896 Old Town Hall of Southeast, at 67 Main Street in Brewster, New York.

In addition to its ongoing exhibits, the Museum also offers traveling and temporary exhibits each year. Other programs presented by the Museum include local history presentations in school districts and senior citizen organizations throughout Putnam and Westchester.

Through Southeast Museum's partnership with the Brewster Public Library, monthly History Exchange programs are facilitated by the museum's Executive Director. Recent History Exchange guest presentations included "The History of Slavery in New York," an award-winning documentary by Larry Epstein; Danbury Historian Bridget Guertin's lecture on American contralto and Southeast/Danbury resident Marian Anderson; a discussion and tour of the stained-glassed windows of the First United Methodist Church of Brewster; "The History of Mining in Brewster"; and "The Coming of the Hudson River Railroad the Hyde Park Station." Additionally for this series, to commemorate the nation's semiquincentennial, a program was offered on "The Great Chain Across the Hudson," and Benedict Arnold made an appearance.

Southeast Museum provides visitors access to exhibits featuring local artifacts housed in our facility, reference resources, and local history education opportunities both onsite at our Main Street Brewster location and throughout Putnam and Westchester via collaborative programming with several school districts and community organizations.

In preparation for the celebration of the 250th anniversary of our nation's founding, Southeast Museum chairs two advisory committees designed to create local history education experiences for the Southeast and Putnam County communities: The Town of Southeast Rev250 Advisory Committee and the Putnam Historic Schoolhouse

Committee. The Town of Southeast Rev250 Advisory Committee is composed of representatives from local government, the arts community, the history community, the business community, and the Brewster Central School District for the purpose of planning events to celebrate Putnam County's contributions to this important milestone in our nation's history.

The Putnam County Historic Schoolhouse Curriculum Committee is comprised of historians, educators, and librarians from Kent, Patterson, Mahopac, Brewster, Putnam Valley, Garrison, and Cold Spring. Together with Putnam County Historian Jennifer Cassidy and Southeast Museum Director Deborah Oswald, the committee has been researching records of the historic schoolhouses that once populated our county with the goal of implementing this curriculum in schools across the county.

In June 2026, third grade students from C V Starr Intermediate School will take a field trip to the Old Doansburg Schoolhouse off of Route 22 to learn about early education practices in Southeast.

### **Services Provided**

The Southeast Museum expanded its services in 2025 to include local history presentations provided onsite to students enrolled in the pre-K program through the senior class within the Brewster Central School District as well as the Mahopac School District, the Garrison School District, Lakeview Manor Senior Center, Saint Lawrence O'Toole Senior Citizens Club, and Drum Hill Community Living Center in Peekskill.

Southeast Museum expanded its 2025 Brewster School District New Faculty Bus Tour of Historic sites by including visuals and an artifact scavenger hunt that was enjoyed by all participants.

In addition to students from the Green Chimneys School working at the museum to digitize our historic photograph collection, students from Brewster High School's Living Skills program began a work study internship that enabled developmentally disabled students to categorize and label museum artifacts.

Brewster High School Senior Students have also joined the museum in order to complete their Senior Success projects. Senior Luke Mahoney designed a museum information panel to highlight the history of the Tilly Foster Mine, including the November 2025 dedication of the monument honoring the memory of miners killed in the 1895 mine collapse.

Cadette Girl Scouts from Brewster Troop 1785 have been working on building exhibits and gardens at the museum to earn their Silver Awards. These projects include the creation of an exhibit honoring the rich history of Girl Scouts in Brewster, a garden at the Old Doansburg Church designed to honor the contributions of Brewster resident and accomplished hymn composer Fanny Crosby, and an additional garden paying tribute to appearances in Brewster by the famed composer Charles Ives and Suffragist Susan B. Anthony.

Brewster Eagle Scout Connor Reilly completed his Eagle Scout project on the Croton Reservoir System which is now brilliantly displayed as an exhibit in the museum.

### **Mission Statement**

#### **Mission:**

The Southeast Museum celebrates the history of the town of Southeast and lower Hudson Valley by educating, collecting, preserving, and interpreting significant material artifacts and culture, to serve as a source of community appreciation and inspiration.

#### **Vision:**

To be a financially sustainable organization with an increased and diverse audience, expanded education programs, and secure and stable facility, which is supported by a dedicated board, knowledgeable staff and an engaged lower Hudson Valley community.

#### **Values:**

- Preserving and interpreting accurate history
- Facilitate discussions about heritage.

### **Populations Served**

Throughout 2025, the following populations were served through Southeast Museum programs and events

- Community participants in the Brewster Library History Exchange, Southeast Seniors, Saint Lawrence O'Toole Seniors, and the Drum Hill Senior Living Facility.
- Community members, Chamber of Commerce members, Rotary members, business proprietors, including Latino business owners, and families of past business owners who attended the March 18, 2025, premiere of the exhibit The History of Business in Brewster.
- Students enrolled in the Brewster, Mahopac, and Garrison School Districts as well as Green Chimneys School.
- Brewster Eagle Scouts and Cadette Girl Scouts
- New members of the Brewster Central School District Faculty

- Local artists and supporters of the arts through the museum's collaboration with Putnam History Museum on the March 18 art exhibition premiere, "Revolutionary Visions: Women In the Hudson Highlands During the American Revolution."
- Children and families through the December 7th Festival of Trees and CV Starr student chorus performance in collaboration with the Town of Southeast Cultural Arts Coalition.
- General public attendance during open museum hours.

### **Significant Events and Accomplishments in 2025**

On March 19, 2025, Southeast Museum, in collaboration with the Brewster Chamber of Commerce, the Putnam County Historian, and the Brewster Library, held a well-attended, ribbon-cutting ceremony to premiere its exhibit "The History of Business of Brewster."

Over a year in the making, this exhibit included memories shared by lifelong residents of Brewster during interviews with past proprietors of business and community members who remembered patronizing businesses such as Hope's Drug Store, The Cameo Theatre, and Benny Rosenberg's Stationary Store. Curator Kathleen Zuris created extensive museum panels complete with images of businesses that populated Brewster throughout the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries. An exhibit examining the history of Six Diamond, a successful landscaping business owned by a family from Guatemala, was a highlight of the event.

Southeast Museum sponsored a well-attended workshop at the Putnam County Fair the weekend of July 26-27. Under the History Pavilion, Tinsmith James Columbo from the Sheetmetal Workers Union conducted a Colonial Copper Punching Workshop. Fairgoers enjoyed creating designs on framed sheets of copper using tools supplied by Mr. Columbo.

Our most recent school-based presentation took place in September at the Brewster Central School District conference room to honor Constitution Week. Students from CV Starr Intermediate School explored the American Revolution. Southeast Museum collaborated with the Enoch Crosby Chapter of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution and the American Battlefield Trust to bring a traveling exhibit of banners highlighting the contributions from lesser-known people from the colonies with an emphasis on people from the Hudson Valley.

This traveling exhibit premiered at a well-attended open house held at the museum on September 6, 2025, the day of the Brewster Rotary Fair. Seventh and eighth grade

students from the Garrison School District took a field trip to watch a presentation and experience this exhibit first hand.

Southeast Museum has enjoyed a robust relationship with Putnam County Senior Citizens. Southeast Museum was represented at the Senior Resource Fair organized by Southeast Assemblyman Matt Slater, at the Patterson Recreation Center. In addition to a March 2025 well-received presentation to the Southeast Seniors at their Lakeview Manor Clubhouse, Southeast Museum presented to the St. Lawrence O'Toole Senior Group in September and the Drum Hill Senior Living Facility in Peekskill in November.

As part of the Putnam County Rev250 Committee chaired by George Whipple, Southeast Museum communicated with houses of worship and government building on the eastern side of the county for a December 31, 2025, bell ringing ceremony to usher in the 250th anniversary of the United States. Members of houses of worship and government buildings across Putnam participated in a midnight bell ringing celebration at the location of their choice, or simply enjoyed the sound of Putnam County Ringing in 2026.

#### Traveling Exhibits Coming to Southeast Museum

Southeast Museum will also host several traveling exhibits to celebrate Rev250 including the General Israel Putnam exhibit currently on display at the Putnam History Museum, the Nicholas Fish exhibit currently on display at the Desmond Fish Library, a staged dramatic reading of the play *DIRT* (which explores the founding of Putnam County), and a book signing event by acclaimed historical fiction author Allison Pataki, daughter of former Governor George Pataki, who co-chairs the Putnam County Rev250 Committee.

#### Brewster Oral History Program

Southeast Museum was awarded a grant from the Putnam Arts Council to record interviews with lifelong residents of Brewster as well as descendants of past residents for a Brewster Oral History Program. We will be collaborating with the Town of Southeast Coalition for the Arts to record these interviews which will be edited for a documentary to be premiered at the museum later in 2026.

#### **Staffing**

- Deborah Oswald, Ed.D, joined the Southeast Museum staff as Director of Education and Programming in 2023. Deborah accepted the position of Executive Director in 2024. Deborah is a retired teacher with the North Salem School District and a published author of local women's historical fiction books. She is currently working on her sixth book, which takes place in Brewster and Troy, New York, during the Civil War. Since joining Southeast Museum, Deborah has joined the Brewster Chamber of Commerce and the Rotary Club of Brewster.
- James Nixon III serves as President of the Southeast Museum Board of Trustees.
- Current board trustees include Elizabeth Ryder, Verna Bergstrom, Mary Ann Taormina, Joan Bradley, Carol Bailey, Alexandra Johnson, James Delawder, Carola Genovese.
- Kathleen Zuris joined the museum in May 2024 as Museum Curator. Kathleen is an accomplished researcher, writer, and genealogist who has worked for New Milford Historical Society. Kathleen has created all of the exhibits for the museum's 2025 exhibit on "The History of Business in Brewster." She is currently working on 2026's main event highlighting The Ryder Family Collection of original oil paintings by artist Jean Leon Gerome Ferris.
- Angela Nardozi joined the staff as Director of Administration in October of 2024. Angela brings with her thirty years of office management experience with the PepsiCo Company. She has proven invaluable in streamlining the museum's administrative programming as well as its social media presence.
- James Delawder, local history researcher and member of the Brewster Fire Department, joined the museum as a volunteer in 2024. James composed an article on Revolutionary spy Enoch Crosby for the museum's 2025 Holiday newsletter. He is currently organizing paintings for the March 2026 Ferris Art Exhibit.
- Board trustees Verna Bergstrom, Mary Ann Taormina, and Joan Bradley, as well as volunteer Michelle Carlson, contribute their time and provide coverage on a regular basis at the museum.
- Board trustee Elizabeth Ryder has generously loaned her family's collection of original oil paintings by renowned artist Jean Leon Gerome Ferris for the museum's Rev250 event highlighting these patriotic works of art.

### **Sources of Revenue**

- The Southeast Museum is supported by its membership, Putnam County, the Town of Southeast, New York State Council on the Arts, and other public and private charitable foundations, as well as corporations, local businesses and individuals. A volunteer Board of Trustees governs the museum, while a part-

time Executive Director, a part-time Curator, and a part-time Director of Administration currently manage the museum alongside community volunteers.

- The Southeast Museum wishes to graciously acknowledge Putnam County and the Town of Southeast for their generous support.

### **Goals for 2026**

- The Museum's main Rev250 event will be the March 18, 2026, premiere of The Ryder Family Collection of Original Oil Paintings by renowned artist Jean Leon Gerome Ferris of Philadelphia, who married into the Ryder Family. Long time trustee Elizabeth Ryder has loaned her family's collection of patriotic paintings, honoring such watershed events in American history as the signing of the Mayflower Compact, Henry Hudson's journey up the Hudson, and Lincoln's reading of The Gettysburg Address. The museum is collaborating with the Brewster Chamber of Commerce to promote this event. This event has been made possible by the generosity of George Whipple, Community Foundations, M&T Bank, and Tompkins Bank. This event will be catered by students enrolled in Brewster High School's Living Skills Program.
- Southeast Museum has received a grant from the Putnam Arts Council which will enable the formalization of the interviews conducted throughout 2025 into an oral history project available to museum visitors. The Southeast Museum is collaborating with the Town of Southeast Cultural Arts Coalition and filmmaker Jeffrey Hodges in creating this documentary.
- Digitization of the Museum's Photograph Collection - Southeast Museum is expanding its collaboration with Green Chimneys School to include clients from Community Based Services in hosting a supervised work study program for students and clients to digitize the museum's photograph collection. Students have been uploading photograph historic images to PastPerfect, a software program that will store photos. A link will then be created that will allow the digitized photographs to be available for viewing on the museum's website.

In conclusion, Southeast Museum would once again like to thank Putnam County, the Town of Southeast, The Putnam Arts Council, George Whipple, Community Foundations, M&T Bank, Tompkins Bank, and the New York State Council on the Arts for funding our programs and exhibits.